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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/28/2016

TAGS: PREL PHUM UNHRC FJ TO KR NR TU

SUBJECT: UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - PACIFIC VIEWS OF IRAN CANDIDACY

REF: SECSTATE 66050

Classified By: Ambassador Larry Dinger. Section 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: We delivered reftel demarche on UN Human Rights Council membership to the highest-levels available in Fiji, Tonga, Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu on April 27 and 28. Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, and Tuvalu expressed general concurrence with the points made. All four implied that they are very likely to send instructions for votes against Iran's candidacy and in favor only of candidates with acceptable human-rights records. Tonga's acting Foreign Minister declined to take a stand but said he would convey U.S. views to Minister Tu'a for a decision well before the vote. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Fiji Foreign Minister Tavola informed the Ambassador that MFA has been lobbied by several applicants for HRC seats, but not yet by Iran. In response Fiji has discussed with several interlocutors its own interest in a seat on the Peacekeeping Commission, a role which Fiji hopes the U.S. can support. We promised to convey that request to Washington, while noting the U.S. standard response to such requests. Back on Iran, Tavola has instructed his staff that Fiji needs to support candidates that are "suitable themselves" and are "clean enough to be models." He said Iran "does not impress Fiji at all."

¶3. (C) Tonga Acting Foreign Minister Tone said he was aware of the Iran-candidacy issue, fully comprehends U.S. views, and would pass our demarche to Foreign Minister Tu'a, who returns to Tonga on May 4.

¶4. (C) Nauru Foreign Minister Adeang, on the verge of departing to New York for the UN CSD talks, said he "tend(ed) to think we'd support the U.S. position." He said he would instruct his UN delegate in time for the May 9 vote. "You've got a friend in Nauru," he concluded.

¶5. (C) Kiribati MFA Permanent Secretary Biribo said his government has already been approached by Kiribati's Baha'i community, asking Kiribati not to support Iran. He said his government would take U.S. views into serious consideration and would "not be looking at supporting Iran's bid." (Note: Kiribati does not have a permanent UN representative in New York. It's proxy is cast by New Zealand. End note.)

¶6. (C) Tuvalu's MFA Permanent Secretary, Tine Leuelu, said Tuvalu shares the United States' "deeply held beliefs" that Iran would be an inappropriate member of the council. "Iran would not be the sort of candidate we'd support," he said. In a follow-up discussion, Leuelu said the matter had been discussed with Prime Minister Toafa and there is general

agreement Tuvalu would support the U.S. position on Iran.

DINGER